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Physical Therapists Needed by Peace Corps

For Rehabilitation Program in Venezuela

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The government of Venezuela has requested Peace Corps Volunteer Physical Therapists to help launch a nationwide rehabilitation program there. The regional rehabilitation centers to which the Volunteers will be assigned have never had physical therapists and the need is acute. Regional medical directors are enthusiastically awaiting the Volunteers. Those selected for this program will begin training in February 1966, so applications should be submitted prior to January 15.

DOCUMENTS DEPT.
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Above, Volunteer Kathy Connolly works with crippled orphans in Latin America. Right, Volunteer Anne Peabody gives paraffin bath to leprosy patient.

HISTORY OF THE PROGRAM

Venezuela's general rehabilitation program was begun in 1963 with a detailed survey by the Pan American Health Organization. The program is based on recommendations stemming from this study. Since the original interest in rehabilitation grew out of the Anti-Leprosy Program of the Ministry of Health, the Division of Dermatology is presently directing the program. A separate Division of Rehabilitation is planned to go into operation this year.

A school of physiotherapy is being formed in the School of Public Health of the Central University in Caracas. The first class will be graduated in 1967.

For the past 20 years the Orthopedic Hospital in Caracas has conducted a program of rehabilitation for physically handicapped children, especially those attacked by infantile paralysis. This hospital has a Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Service which works toward the evaluation and treatment of the physically handicapped. The hospital is supported by the Mendoza Foundation, the largest philanthropic organization in Venezuela.

JOB DESCRIPTION

Each Volunteer physiotherapist, along with an occupational therapist, will be assigned to a regional rehabilitation center or to a center in Caracas (the capital). In addition to patient care under the direction of the physiatrists, they will participate directly in the training of the rehabilitation aids (orderlies) and visiting nurses (vocational nurses).

The Volunteers assigned to the regional rehabilitation centers will divide their time between the regional center and outlying rural clinics, where they will supervise the training of auxiliary personnel in home

rehabilitation procedures as well as participate in the orientation of rural physicians in rehabilitation methods. Those in Caracas will devote part of their time to work in the Hospital Orthopedico. Work will include the rehabilitation of patients with Hansen's disease as well as problems common to the United States. Adequate physiotherapy equipment is available in the regional centers and in the Orthopedic Hospital.

In summary, physiotherapists will:

1. Care for patients under the supervision of a physiatrist.
2. Train rehabilitation aids (orderlies).
3. Train visiting nurses (vocational nurses) in home rehabilitation procedures.
4. Participate in disability evaluation.
5. Participate in the planning and development of the rehabilitation program as a member of the rehabilitation team.

Volunteer Anne Peabody teachers one patient to bandage the leg of another. (All photos by Dan Goldsmith).

TRAINING

Volunteers will train for about three months at an American university, where they will study the history and culture of Venezuela, the Spanish language, and take refresher courses in American and world history as well

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as a health and physical conditioning program. Also include training course will be a technical studies portion devoted to preparing the Volunteer to work effectively as a physical therapist in Venezuela. Volunteers will spend approximately three months in training and twenty-four months in Venezuela.

ABOUT VENEZUELA

Venezuela is located on the northern coast of South America and is roughly the size of Texas and Oklahoma combined, with a population of over seven million. Venezuela's wealth of petroleum and other resources has produced the highest rate of economic growth and per capita income in Latin America. But the high national income is distributed unevenly and several million persons are living under conditions of extreme poverty.

The climate is mild and spring-like year round with only slight changes in temperature marking the seasons. During the forty-five days of vacation during the two years overseas, Volunteers will enjoy traveling in Venezuela or the other countries of Latin America.

Peace Corps service can be rewarding, exciting and satisfying. It provides a means for broadening insights into another culture, becoming better equipped to evaluate your personal standards and applying your skill as a physical therapist and your skill as a human being where it is very much needed.

HOW TO APPLY

Pick up a Peace Corps Volunteer Questionnaire (application) at any Post Office or write to the Medical Skills Desk, Office of Public Affairs, Peace Corps, Washington, D. C. 20525. Applications for this program should be submitted as soon as possible.

ALSO NEEDED FOR PEACE CORPS REHABILITATION PROGRAMS

Speech Therapists
Brace Makers
Occupational Therapists

GSA DC PC 66-2400